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LADY ATHLYNE

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(Continued.)
CHAPTER III.
De Hooge's Spruit.

In Italy Joy Ogilvie learned to the full, consciously and unconsciously, all the lessons which a younger civilization can learn from an elder. To the sympathetic there are lessons in everything; every spot that a stranger foot has pressed has something to teach. Especially to one coming from the rush of strenuous life, which is the note of America, the old-world calm and luxury of repose have lessons in toleration which can hardly be otherwise acquired. In the great battle of life we do not match ourselves against individuals but against nations and epochs; and when it is finally borne in on us that others, fashioned as we ourselves and with the same strength and ambitions and limitations, have lived and died and left no individual mark through the gathering centuries, we can, without sacrifice of personal pride, be content to humbly take his place.

The month spent at and round Naples had been a never-ending dream of delight; and this period of quietude told of her natural sensuous nature. Already she had accepted the idea of a man worthy of love; and the time went to the strengthening of the image. There was a subtle satisfaction in the received idea; the wealth of her nature had found a market, a kind. That is to say, she was satisfied to export, and that was the end of her thoughts for the present. Importation might come later.

"The mind's Rialto hath its merchandise."
None of the family ever alluded to Lord Athlyne in the presence of her father. Each in her own way knew that he would not like the idea; and so the secret—it had by this very reticence grown to be a secret by now—was kept.

On the voyage back to New York Joy's interest in Lord Athlyne became revived by the surrounding. They had not been able to secure cabins in the Cryptic; and so had come by the Hamburg-American Line from Southampton. By this time Aunt Julia's interest in the matter had begun to wane. To her it had been chiefly a jest, with just that spice of which came from the effect which she supposed the episode would have on Joy's life. As Joy did not ever allude to the matter she had almost ceased to remember it.

It was Joy's duty—she thought of it as her privilege—to make her father's morning cocktail which he always took before breakfast. One morning it was brought by Judy. Colonel Ogilvie, thanking her asked why he had the privilege of her ministrations. Unthinkingly she answered:
"Oh, it's all right. The Countess made it herself, but she asked me to take it to you as she is feeling the rolling of the ship and wants to keep in bed."

"Then who?" asked the Colonel his brows wrinkled in wonder. "What Countess? I did not know we had one on board."
"Lady Athlyne of course, Oh" she had suddenly recollected herself. As she saw she was in for an explanation she faced the situation boldly and went on:
"That is the name you know, that we call Joy."

"The name you call Joy—the Countess? Lady Athlyne." In a laughing way, full of interest, she explained that she tried to explain, her brother-in-law listening the while with increasing gravity. When she had done he said quietly:
"Is this one of your jokes, Judy; or did the Countess make two cocktails?" He stopped and then added: "Forgive me. I should not have said that. But is it a joke, dear?"

"Not a bit," she answered spiritedly. "That is, this particular occasion is not a joke. It is the whole thing that is that."

"A joke to take . . . Is there a real man of the name of the Earl of Athlyne?"
"I believe so," she said this faintly; she had an idea of what was coming. Then Judith, I should like some rational explanation of how you come to couple my daughter's name in such a way with that of a strange man. It is not seemly to say the least of it. Does my daughter allow this to be done?"

"Oh Colonel, it is only a joke amongst ourset. I hope you won't make too much out of it."
"Too much of it! I couldn't make enough of it! If the damned fellow was here I'd show him!"
"But, my God, the man doesn't know anything about it; no more than you did a minute ago." Miss Judith was really alarmed; she knew the Colonel. He waved his hand as though dismissing her from the argument:
"Don't worry yourself, my dear; this is a matter amongst men. We know how to deal with such things." He said no more on the subject, but talked during breakfast as usual. When he rose to go on deck Judy followed him timidly. When they were away from the few already on deck she touched him on the arm.
"Give me just a minute?" she entreated.

"A score if you like, my dear!" he answered heartily as he led her to a seat in a sheltered corner behind the saloon skylight, and sat beside her. "What is it?"
"Lucius you have always been very good to me. All these years that I have lived in your house as your very sister you never had a word for me that wasn't kind and helpful. He interrupted her, laying his hand on her cheek which was on the arm of her deck chair:
"Why else, my dear Judy! You and I have always been the best of friends. And my dear you have never brought anything but sunshine and sweetness into the house. Your presence has kept care away from us whenever he tried to show his nose. . . . Why mustn't you be kind to me? You mustn't cry!" he spoke he had taken out a folded silk pocket-handkerchief and was very tenderly wiping her eyes. Judy went on sobbing a little at moments:
"I have always tried to make happiness, and I have never troubled you with asking favours, have I?"

"No need to ask, Judy. All I have is yours just as it is. Sully's or Joy's? Suddenly she smiled, her eyes still gleaming with recent tears:
"I am asking a favour now—by way of a change. Lucius on my honour—and I know no greater oath with you than that—this has been a perfectly harmless piece of fun. It arose from a remark of that nice Irish stewardess on the Cryptic that no one was good enough to marry Joy except one man: the young nobleman whom she had nursed. And she really came to believe that it would come off. She says she has some sort of foreknowledge of things. The Colonel smiled:
"Granted all this, my dear; what is it you want me to do?"
"To do nothing!" she answered quickly. Then she went with some hesitation.

"Lucius you are so determined when you take up an idea, and I know you are pleased with this little joke. You are mixing it with honour—the honour that you fight about; and if you go on, it may cause pain to us all. We are only a pack of women, after all, and you mustn't be hard on us."
"Judy, my dear, I am never hard on a woman, am I?"
"No! Indeed, you're not," she avowed heartily. "You're the very incarnation of sweetness, and gentleness, and tenderness, and chivalry with me."
"But then you take it out of the men that cross you!"
"That's as a gentleman should be. I take it, he said, reflexively, unconsciously stroking his white moustache. Then he said briskly:
"Now Judy seriously tell me what you wish me to do or not to do. I must have some kind of a clue to your wishes you know." As she was silent for a moment he went on gravely. "I think I understand, my dear. Be quite content, I take it all for a joke and a joke between us it shall remain. But I must speak to Joy about it. There are things which I wish to use as subjects for jokes lead to misunderstandings. Be quite easy in your mind. You know I love my daughter too well to give her a moment's pain that I can spare her. Thank you Judy for speaking to me. I might have misunderstood and gone perhaps too far. But you know how sensitive I am. Joy calls it—about my name and my family I am; and I hope you will always bear that in mind. And besides my dear, there is the other gentleman to be considered. He too, may have a word to say. As he is a nobleman he ought to be additionally scrupulous about any misuse of his name; and of course I should have to resent any implication made by him against any member of my family."

"Good Lord!" said Judy to herself, as he stood up and left her with his usual courtly bow. "What a family to deal with. This poor little joke is as apt to end in bloodshed as a war. The Colonel is on the war-path already; I can see that by his stateress!"
"I am proud of my name, Father, very proud of it and I always shall be!" She had drawn herself upright and had something of her father's splendid personal pride. The word of the word "Father" instead of "Daddy" showed that she was conscious of the formality.

"Quite right, little girl. That is your name now; and will in a way always be. But you may marry you know; and then your husband's name will be your name, and you will on your side be the guardian of his honour. We must never trifle with a name, dear. Those people who go under an alias are to my mind the worst of criminals."

"Isn't that rather strong, Daddy, when murder, theft, burglary and theft and wife-beating and cheating at cards are about!" She felt that she was through the narrow place now and could go back to her railway. Her father was quite grave. He walked up and down a few paces as though arranging his thoughts and words. When he spoke he did so carefully and deliberately:
"Not so, little girl. These, however bad they may be, are individual offenses and are punished by law. But a false name—even in jest, my dear—is an offense against society generally, and hurts and offends every one. And in addition it is every one of the sins you have named; and all the others in the calendar as well."

"How on earth do you make that out, Daddy?"
"Take them in order as you mentioned them. Murder, burglary, theft, wife-beating, cheating at cards! What is murder? Killing without justification! Does not one who approaches another in false guise kill something? The murderer takes the life; the other kills what is often more than life: self-respect, belief in human nature, faith. One only kills the body; but the other kills the soul. Burglary and theft are the same offense differently expressed; theft is the meaner crime that is all. Well, disguise is the thief's method. Sometimes he relies on the absence of others, sometimes on darkness, sometimes on a mask, sometimes on the appearance or identity of some one else. But he never deals with the normal condition of things; pretence of some kind must always be his aid. The man, therefore, who relies on pretence when he knows that the truth would be his undoing, is a thief."

"Daddy you argue as well as a Philadelphia lawyer!"
"I don't believe much in lawyers!" said the old man dryly. "As to wife-beating!"
"I'm afraid you've struck a snag there, Daddy! There isn't much pretence about that crime, anyhow!"
"Not at all, my dear. That comes within the category of murder. The man who descends to that abominable crime would kill the woman if he dared. He is a coward as well as a murderer, and should be killed like a mad dog!"

"Bravo Daddy. I wish there was a man like you to deal with every county. But how about cheating at cards. That's a poser, I think!"
"No trouble about that, Joy. It is cheating at cards!"
"How do you argue that out, Daddy?"

"Any game of cards is a game of honour. So many cards, so much skill, that after all a game of cards is a recognized rule of the game; and, over all, a general belief in the honour of all the players. I have seen a man across a hundred—hundred—in honourable duel, my dear—for hesitating markedly at poker when he stood pat on a 'full house.' That was pretence, and against the laws of honour. He paid for it with his life." Joy wrinkled her brows: "I see it's quite wrong, father, but I don't quite see how it fits into the argument," she said.

"That is simple enough, daughter. As I say, it is a pretence. Don't you see that after all a game of cards is a simple thing compared with the social life of which it is only an occasional episode. If a man—or a woman either, Joy—leads another it must be with some intention to deceive. And in that deception, and by means of it, there is some gain—something he or she desires and couldn't otherwise get. Isn't that plain enough?"

"All right, Father: I quite see. I understand now what you mean. I did not ever look at things in quite that way. Thank you very much, dear, for warning me so kindly too. I'll stop the joke, and not allow it to go on so far as I can stop it."

"How do you mean? Does anyone else know it?"
"I have written to one or two girls at home. Daddy, you know girls are always fond of such foolishness."

"Had you not better write to them and tell them not to mention it?"
"Good Gracious! Why you dear old goose of a Daddy it is evident you don't know girls. That would be the very way to make things buzz. Oh, no! we'll simply drop it; and they'll soon forget it. I may have to tell them something else, though, to draw them away from it."

"Hm!" said her father. She looked at him with a sly archness:
"I suppose, Daddy, it wouldn't do to have it that an Italian Grand Duke proposed for me—to you of course!"
"Certainly not, Miss Impudence! I'm not to be drawn into any of your foolish girls' chatter. There, run away and let me smoke in peace!" She turned away, but came back.
"Am I forgiven, Daddy?"
"Forgiven! Lord bless the child, why there's nothing to forgive. I only caution, I know well that my little girl is clear grit, straight through; and I trust her as I do myself. Why Joy, darling, he put his arm affectionately round her shoulder "you are my little girl! The only one I have or ever shall have; and so, God willing, you shall be to me to the end."

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